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## SERMON XXIII.

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### THE LAW OF GROWTH, IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.\*

"FOR the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."—MARK 4: 28.

GOD creates few results by a direct operation. He introduces forces which are to be the causes and elements of such results; but then he leaves these forces to operate, each according to its law, in the production of the effects. And though his plan includes those effects, and contemplates always the end from the beginning, he does not interpose to anticipate that end, or to realize his supreme and ultimate designs by any immediate application of his will. Growth and development, toward a triumph, are just as much a part of his plan as the triumph itself; and all the subordinate tendencies and energies which he originates, and which he locks together in the infinite complex of his complete system, have each

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their necessary work to do, their period for doing it, their separate responsibilities, and their special successes. The whole system of things, which God has ordained, thus converges to a result which is infinitely dear and precious to his mind, and yet he patiently waits for that result, and does not hasten it; and is indeed all the more precious to him, because so many distinct auxiliaries are combined to effect it, because so various and comprehensive a plan attains therein its sublime consummation.

This fact shows us vividly the patience, the power, and the majesty of God. It brings the literal infinitude of his mind into contrast with our feebleness, which leaves us uncertain of every thing not secured. It honors the earth, and dignifies man, by making us the free and personal co-workers with the Infinite. And it shows our age, and every age, sublime as that of the incarnation itself, because vitally associated with those preparatory periods through which God has been working, and with those cycles of fruition which shall open in the future. To create a result, however desirable, is not so grand, either as an exhibition of wisdom or of power, as to energize and organize the forces which tend to it, and to impress on them the laws which make it certain. The mind that waits, and works through means, invigorating the means by the use which it makes of them, subduing resistances by combining auxiliaries, and still securing with certainty the ultimate result—this is mightier than the mind which operates alone, and which tolerates no delay.

We see this law exemplified clearly in every harvest, like that which now is beginning to spring up, over valley and hillside, throughout our country. God does not create the fields of wheat, by touching the earth with the finger of his power, or shooting across it the fiat of his will. He does not load the trees with their fruit, or stock the earth with its nourishing esculents, where no skill of man has been expended upon them, or where nature is simply sterile and unfriendly. But he long ago ordained the properties by which this wealth, of grains or of fruit, may be propagated from seeds. He fitted the earth to the nourishment of such seeds: so that where planted and kindly nurtured, they shall spring up luxuriantly. He made the sun's rays to bear a quickening influence on their wings, wherever the day-break pours its beauty across the lands. He framed the law by which the showers that seem so sportive, as if dancing through the air in mere mockery of restraint, come with almost the regularity of a star, to mitigate the heats, to vitalize and enrich the responsive soil, to shed fragrance upon the flowers, and fill with juice the maturing fruits. And then he placed man in the midst of this system, with faculties intelligent, inventive, persistent, to use these means, avail himself of these forces, and himself, as a subordinate worker under God, to produce the harvest which bears to him its wealth, and nourishes his life.

The end is thus as really God's work as if he created it by an instant operation; and yet many influences are made to work with him, and the harvest can not come till spring-time and summer have prepared the way for it. As the Saviour says, in that passage from which the text is taken: "A man casts seed into the earth, and it springs and grows up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come." Not God's work only, but man's as well, *his* plans, his expenditures and the sweat of his brow; not one moment only, a moment of creation, but days of brightness and days of shadow, with the nights intervening; nay, not one season or year alone, but many successive years of tillage, each one of which has left the soil enriched, and prepared for new harvests; all these will be expressed on every wagon that shall bear, by and by, its ruddy or golden burden to the barn or the threshing-floor. The result will come only after fit interval; in the gradual development, and the silent coöperation, of many forces.

And the same law holds true in the development of the mind. God does not create the intelligent mind, on earth at least—we have no reason to suppose, I think, that he does so any where—with its forces and faculties full-formed at the beginning; with all principles of truth apparent to its thought, and all elements of experience infolded in its consciousness; furnished with its knowledges, ennobled by high and clear intuitions, from the outset of its being; and fitted with courage, wisdom, zeal, and virile vigor, for the work it is called to. He creates it infantile. He makes the very commencement of its being dependent on others, his subordinate creatures. And then he leaves the forces that are lodged in it, and that are innately prophetic of a future, to be unfolded, trained, matured, to be equipped with attainments, and disciplined for work, under the action of other minds, by the exercise of thought, by the ministry of experience, above all by contact with effort and disappointment. In this way, at last, he brings to pass the result, so far as we ever perceive it in this world; and in this way, undoubtedly, he still carries it forward, when the scene of development, and the sphere of activity, is removed to another and a higher state of being. And the grander activities, the more noble companionships, the more pure and illustrious experiences of heaven, do but perfect the progress that here was commenced.

The soul hath there its wonderful harvest, of knowledge, power, taste, affection, the experience of good, communion with God, the full triumph of eternity. And that harvest comes, like this in the natural world, as the real result of God's wise working. Yet that harvest comes, also like this, as the issue of many subordinate forces; the outcome of the years which are days to the soul; of the

use that unfolds, and the thought that enlightens it; of the bright or the chilling experiences that greet it. And thus again we see the wisdom, and admire the patience, of Him whom nothing escapes or disturbs, who ever accomplishes his final designs; who never hastes, who never tarries!

And that which is true of the individual mind, is true of the race which all such minds form; is true of its culture, of its civilization. This is always progressive, and is never instantaneous. No nation comes to eminence in character, and to a corresponding supremacy in position, without many and painful preparatory processes. There is "first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear." First, naturally come the means of subsistence; then, conveniences; then, elegancies; and only after long and still-advancing struggle, the great achievement of a perfected civilization. The cavern, or the cabin; then, the house; then, the village; and afterward the city, with palaces and piers, and consecrating temples. The spoken word, and the spontaneous song; then, literature in its permanence; and not till long afterward that literature in its various and copious departments, of eloquence, science, philosophy, poetry, and the history which includes and perpetuates all these. First, industry; then, art. First, hollow logs, and timorous barks; and afterward great ships, that spread their wings on every wind, or made the seas to pause and throb as the pulsating energy thunders above them. First, a tribe; and then—when years and generations have passed, when soldiers have fought, and statesmen have planned, when religions have diffused their spirit through society, and reciprocating industries have knit it together, when homes have been established, and families have been organized, and parents have transmitted their qualities to their children—*then* a great, enlightened, and peaceful commonwealth, rich in all manhood, replete with resources, and inwardly compacted in vital union: this is the method of all civilization; this the history of nations. And an angel descending to-night on these streets, and speaking to us in the language of the Seraphim, were not so great and strange a miracle as a tribe created with all means of civility, and rearing in their first rudimental attempt the Parthenon or St. Peter's, the Code Justinian or the logic of Aristotle.

The seed-time *must* come first. The ages of effort, of watchfulness, and of struggle, must fill the centuries that make the summer. And then, at last, the harvest is reached, whose shining standards shake in history, whose jubilant thanksgivings speak the triumph of a nation, and whose influences or parts dispersed abroad become themselves, in their quick turn, the seeds of other still grander civilizations, in other lands, and other years.

And just as it is with this growth and culture of individual minds, or of minds associated in the union of society, just so it is, according to the Saviour, with the Kingdom of God in the soul of



man. "So is the kingdom of God," he says, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how;" for here, too, as well as in the natural world, as well as in all other parts of man's history, there is "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."—The kingdom of God begins in any man in the solemn and central purpose of his soul to become like God, to honor and to serve him; the personal commitment of himself to the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and under the quickening influence of the Spirit. Before this conscious consecration, indeed, that kingdom may really though invisibly have commenced in him; its real and spiritual inauguration being shown in the new convictions, new desires, new tastes for righteousness, and new aspirations, that are evident in him; the promises of God, now welcomed by his soul, becoming its heralds, and the truths of the word, now felt and revered, its celestial pioneers. But in this central and permanent purpose it is finally established. The citadel so long resisting has at length surrendered, and the banner of the cross is planted upon it. The empire of the mind, from which all empires take significance, yields to its rightful lord and king; and over that act the angels rejoice, and in it is determined a destiny for eternity.

And yet this purpose is but the commencement of a course whose end is still distant. One temptation after another must be met and overcome. One desire after another, which has grown inordinate through long indulgence, must be brought into harmony with the law of holiness. The principles of action, though now pure and high, require to be confirmed by the discipline of effort; the thoughts of divine truth to be made more clear, comprehensive, controlling; above all, the affections, the aptitudes for which have so long remained dormant, demand to be developed, cherished, matured, until they shall answer as they ought to God's character; until they shall spring spontaneously toward Christ, on his cross or his throne; until they shall purely control and impel our whole moral action, making duty a delight, privation a pleasure if borne for God, and death a sure and immeasurable gain!

It is not till after long seasons of effort that this magnificent consummation is reached; that the world seems nothing, and God all in all; that the cross becomes the summit-fact, in personal experience as in the world's history; and that heaven opens bright and near its gates of pearl! It is not till sorrows and prosperities both have brought their ministry from God to the soul; not till life has been experienced, in its successes and its changes; not till sermons and treatises, works and worships, self-denials and charities, homes and teachers, have done their office; and the communion with friends, the communion of the Church, intercourse with the poor, a kindly and quickening ministry to the bereaved,

contemplation, study, prayer, self-scrutiny—all have taught and disciplined the soul, and brought it in a measure to the likeness of Christ's. This harvest comes after long summer; first a purpose, then a principle; then a habit; then a life, pervading, renewing, glorifying the soul; then the heavenly nature and peace! God does not create even this result, by one motion of his power; but he originates the forces and laws, and places the man whom they shall affect in the attitude for this, and leaves them to work, under his gracious Spirit, to their certain development. And so all the more the result gives him glory!

And as with his kingdom in any one soul, so with that kingdom in its progress over the earth, to its final complete and enduring supremacy. It, also, requires time for its establishment; is developed by influences, not created by a word; is brought to victory after wide struggle, not permitted to overleap and anticipate that struggle. We might know, perhaps, that this would be so, from the progress of this kingdom in any personal subject of it; for that parallels and prophesies its whole progress on the earth. How clear it is that historically it *hath* been so.

The kingdom of God, as now erected on the earth, began in a promise, and an influence of his Spirit, on one human mind. It extended so slowly that when ages had passed only one un conspicuous and wandering family was included within it. It spread by degrees, with the growth of that family, till it compassed a tribe. It went out with that tribe to a remote province, sequestered though central, where for ages it was hidden, and to which it was limited. At last, through the coming of Christ its Head, it was fitted to extend, independently of all sectional or national divisions, till the world should be embraced in it. The single injunction, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," is the demonstration of the change. It marks the dawn of the new era. The labors of the apostles, and of their missionary successors, proceed on the new plan, are organized and animated by the light and the scope of these novel aims.

But still the progress of this kingdom of light—how slow it was! It assailed the Roman Empire, and was long in subduing it; and when it had conquered, it found in that conquest its mightiest adversary, and was almost crushed through its very success. There followed nights, in that slow growth, which seemed interminable. The darkness was dense, and the strange cold extreme. Yet again the day dawned; and by agencies which God had prepared and set forth, the work again was carried forward. It spread from one mind to another, and to others and still to others. It extended by degrees from city to city, and was borne abroad gradually from kingdom to kingdom. It came over to this country with a Christian colonization. It has here been built up—this invisible kingdom of righteousness, peace, and the joy which they give—by the

labors, the prayers, and the life of generations. It has a wide yet only a partial and imperfect establishment, in this land of ours. It has begun to be sent abroad by our exertions, coöperating with those of other Christian nations, to nations which before it had never entered; to India, China, and the islands of the sea. It has fixed on those shores its scattered outposts, fringing the immense circumference of heathenism with the series of its beacons, and dotting the expanse with the citadels of its power. It is destined, undoubtedly, to penetrate more deeply with every year the interior of these countries, and to circulate more widely from them unto others; to get firmer establishment where now it has only an incipient lodgment; and to make all other institutions and influences subordinate to its own, all other powers its ready auxiliaries, all languages its ministers, all men its subjects, till the Earth is possessed by it.

But yet from the first its progress has been slow, and has often been broken by partial reactions. Every step in its advance has been the fruit of great endeavor. Every trophy it has won has been a trophy of conquest; the conquest of truth over ignorance and error; the conquest of love over passion and pride. And its ultimate completeness, the establishing of its final supremacy on earth, the removal of whatever retards or resists it, the including of all men in its benign reign, will come, when it comes, as a long-waiting harvest, preceded by ages of planting and of growth, by centuries of darkness, and centuries of light, by the tempests of persecution, as well as the quiet and fertilizing rains of the influence of God's Spirit.

God has not created even this vast result—which is dearer to him than all others combined in which the earth is involved, for which, indeed, the earth itself, with its continents and seas, and with all men upon it, is maintained in being—he has not created this result by a word, or secured it by any immediate operation. But he has inaugurated the forces and laws which tend toward this; has planted the germs of it, in the nature of man, and the gift of the Gospel, and then has left it to be gradually wrought out by the labor, the sacrifice, and the fidelity of his people. He follows the same method in this as in all his other works affecting terrestrial interests and progress. Although foreseeing the end from the beginning, making all diverse tendencies and all special forces to converge upon one magnificent issue, and overshadowing the whole progress with the mystery of Omniscience, he works from small beginnings onward. He involves human labor, combines many auxiliaries, permits transient failures, brings about the result by degrees, though with certainty, and makes the splendid attainment at last to spring from a thousand harmonious shoots, and to bear a testimony as well to the patient activity of his children as to his all-encompassing and constant assistance! His method in this

cause, which is supreme to his heart, would depart from and contradict his method in all others, if this were otherwise. If it wanted this analogy with his other operations, of "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," we should hardly be able to identify as we now do with his mind and will, this his grandest procedure for the benefit of the race!

But if now we bear in mind this fact, so evident, certain, and so primary as it is, we shall see some things which are important to be considered, and which, I think, will animate our faith wherever we are called to labor for Christ. Especially, perhaps, are they fitting to the young, who have many years to which to look forward, but who are apt, with a fervid enthusiasm, to desire an instant recompense for their labor, and to feel themselves disappointed when that does not come.

I. In the first place, we shall see that **WE OUGHT NEVER TO BE DISCOURAGED IN A TRUE CHRISTIAN WORK, OF WHATEVER KIND, BY WHAT SEEMS A SLOW GROWTH.**

Such a gradual accomplishment is natural and normal, and should never alarm us. The dumb realms of nature are themselves, at this very moment, our witness that the harvest can not come till the seed has been ripened. The weeks of summer seem long in passing. The husbandman thinks to-day, perhaps, that if he had had the framing of the earth, and the arrangement of its laws, he would not have interposed so long an interval between the seed and the sheaf, between the furrows of spring and the sickles of autumn. Very probably he would not. Ten crops in a year, or a crop every week, would rather have been suggested by his impatience. The loam would have burst with spontaneous fertility, making labor unnecessary, and watchfulness superfluous; and a pyrotechnic splendor, dropping fruitfulness from its shafts, would have taken the place of that milder sunshine, which comes more silently, and operates more slowly, although with final assurance of success.

But God saw another method than this, more honorable to him, and more useful for us; and so he interposed between labor and its fruits a space which no impatience can abridge, no art evade, and no enterprise overleap. He makes each summer a minister for himself, to discipline man's nature; to sow in it the graces of steadfastness and faith, more precious than waving ranks of wheat; to mature in it hopefulness, and the heroism which that brings, instead of either relaxing it into indolence, or inflaming it with desires that grow hotter with success. He calls out the labor and the thought of his creatures, protracts their period of forecast and of patience, and makes the harvest, when finally it comes, their copious reward.

And so, precisely, in the spiritual world. There are periods when we seem to be properly discouraged by long delays. We

have testified for truth, and have sent the principles of righteousness abroad. But the growth is so slow as to be nearly imperceptible. We are almost tempted to repeat the child's folly, and to pluck up the influences to see if they are growing. We pray in feverish eagerness for the result; and sometimes recoil against God's plans, which seem to advance with so tardy a motion. This is thoroughly irreligious. It is thoroughly irrational. It overlooks the great wisdom of God's method. It overlooks the lessons of experience. Plant a principle of truth in any society, and there let it work. The interval between the sowing and the success, is as much a part of God's great plan as is the final success itself; is just as wisely and properly a part of it. If results crowned our efforts the moment they were made, we should tend toward indolence, as the stone toward the center. The discipline of delay is invaluable to us; and to all who are trying to do God's work. It invokes our faith. It invigorates Christian purpose. It becomes the occasion of manliness, perseverance, a magnanimous heroism and endurance in action, which without it were not possible. And therefore that delay is almost always embraced in God's gracious plan. He might do without it; it is better that he should not! He sometimes shows us, by a sudden success, how easily he might every where anticipate the years, and bring the harvest to tread at once on the steps of the sower. He could touch at this instant the hearts of so many, whom the truth has appealed to—as he has done but recently throughout our land—that vast results should at once bless our eyes, and all the interests of his word and of righteousness, be miraculously set forward. But he does not do this, except on occasions that form marked exceptions to his ordinary method, because it is better for us that he should not, and better for all the great interests of his system. It is better to wait, and to move in harmony with the law which elsewhere prevails in his working. And for us to quarrel with this ordination, to despond because of it, or to feel that God has forsaken his work because we do not hear his swift steps sounding on in the front of his children—it shows only how little we have comprehended his plans, in their breadth, and their relations; how faint and feeble our very faith is!

Nay, my friend, whosoever thou art, who art laboring in any department of Christ's work—who art giving of thy money, or better of thy time and thy personal effort, of the sweat of thy brain and the fire of thy heart, to bring men to God, to advance truth on earth, to rebuke the oppressor and liberate the bound, to raise up the fallen and renovate the strong, to make the world more like to heaven, and man more meet for angelic societies—be thou never discouraged because success tarries long! But in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand. Sow truth and charity beside all waters; sow their principles on the waters, as they scatter the wheat broadcast upon the Nile, and



though it be after many days, the fruit shall come, in living pomp, in teeming wealth!

II. In the second place we may see, I think, with equal clearness, in the light of this theme, that **WE ARE NEVER TO BE DISCOURAGED IN OUR EFFORTS FOR CHRIST'S KINGDOM, BY ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES**; nor by any unexpected combination of these, and their prolonged operation.

Rains ripen the harvests, and make them more abundant. An uninterrupted sunshine destroys them. I tarried, a summer or two ago, as did many of you, no doubt, amid scenes where overhead, for weeks and months, was one long reign of vivid sunshine. With the rise of the morning over the hills, it poured on the river its effluent splendor, and filled the forests with a tremulous glory. With each successive hour until noon, the vast effulgence beamed abroad, on grain-fields and on meadows, where the mower waited with eager scythe, where the farmer watched for ripening fruits. And through the long and bright afternoon, while day waned slowly toward its setting, the same radiance was above, the same brilliance was around, until the lingering sun had passed, serene, majestic, through sapphire gates, or with the pomp of stormless clouds, beyond the west. Day after day, as the series advanced, the beauteous show remained unchanged. No rains interrupted, no storm-clouds shadowed the brilliant scene. It seemed the very triumph of sunshine; the very coronation and enthronement of summer; the season of all most marked by smiles!

And under it all tillage paused, and harvests died! Vegetation and foliage, as if scorched by the touch of fiery fingers, curled up and died. The morass turned to hardness; the roads to powder. The uplands cracked, and opened dry rifts beneath the heat. A stony sterility took the place of sweet fields. The tassels of the corn shriveled upon the stalks; the nutritious roots were withered in the earth; fruits wilted on sapless boughs, and cattle turned from the parched herbage. Another summer, splendid as that, had bred a famine more wide and fatal than ever before assailed mankind; a famine which the terrors of the pestilence and the siege could only have imagined in their dark horrors! And nothing saved the earth but **RAINS**, that dashed against it in stormy vehemence; that seemed to threaten to shake it from its place, or to overwhelm it with floods, yet that quickened its frame, renewed its powers, and made it bloom with immeasurable wealth.

And so in all good works and plans. Too long prosperity lays waste the Church. Its elevation to the throne made Anti-Christ supreme, over all darkened Europe, a thousand years. Its rapid successes have almost always inflamed its pride, exhaled its modest and most beautiful virtues, and made a future reaction certain. It is by slow growth, against what seem evils and sore disadvantages, that it works its best advance. Disappointments educate it. Hope



deferred for a time, but not too long, gives the next hope solidity, and a sure self-support. Even years of general coldness and gloom concentrate the vital warmth of godliness in the hearts where that lingers. A more ardent piety flames through the clouds that had seemed to envelop it. Even whirlwinds of popular commotion and rage carry elements of the truth abroad more widely, and sometimes drift them over seas. And the harvest, when it comes, is all the richer, its sheaves more full, its expanse more broad, for these very circumstances that looked most adverse. A missionary dies, in the prime of his manhood, in the vigor of his strength; but how often has it happened that when his story was repeated at home, five others sprang up to take his place. Persecution breaks up some seat of labor; but how often have other cities and ages rejoiced at the force that drove the disciples forth from Jerusalem. The truth is overborne where it had once been mighty. A whole nation swings back, from a proximate righteousness to a carnival of folly, or a blind and terrible championship of crime. But they who love the truth and honor it, and who are themselves the disciples of right, are only fortified and assured in the convictions thus assailed, and they rally on their behalf with a grander enthusiasm.

And so the work goes surely on, and never ceases. Discouragements are among its principal means. Oppositions gives signal illustration to its triumph. The winter prepares the way for the summer. Night alternates day, to make this more quickening. The whirlwind and the frost are the helpers of the sower; and the very storm, that shouted through the sky as if chaos had come again, fills up above the lid the garner.

III. Let us always remember, too, and this is the third remark suggested by the theme, that GOOD INFLUENCES ARE LINKED TO GOOD ISSUES IN THIS WORLD, AS THE SEED TO ITS FRUITAGE; and that so every effort for the good of mankind, through the kingdom of Christ, shall have its meet and great result.

God governs his systems, both physical and spiritual, by wise and pure laws. If he did not, they would have no unity or consistency; no progress from a beginning, no convergence toward an end. They would not be indeed real systems, but only successions of unregulated forces, jarring against and destroying each other, and tending to no benign and large issue.

But the basis on which all special laws rest in the physical world, is a basis of necessity. The basis of such in the moral world, is one simply of certainty; yet this is as really secure as the other. The forces which act in this latter department do not exert an irresistible control on those who freely submit to their impression. They are forces of motive, example, instruction, and not of mechanical impression and constraint. And yet, when sufficient in amount and in kind, they are as sure of their results as

if they were physical. An argument for action is presented to a man, which grapples his judgment, convinces his intellect, persuades his sensibilities, stirs up to prompt and vigorous movement his executive powers, and make him all the more disposed to do or to suffer, the more he considers it; and the blossoming of the tree when the time for it has come, or the rushing forth into clusters of purple or golden-hued globes, of the life that invisibly works in the vine, is not more certain than is his response to that appeal. He might resist it, but he certainly will not. It does not shackle his will with bonds; but it determines, with spiritual efficacy, the mode in which that will will reveal itself.

So a character is presented for our admiration, instinct with benevolence, self-devoted, unworldly; and the good are attracted, and the evil are repulsed, according to the opposite tendencies of their minds, both certainly, though both freely. A truth is proclaimed, especially a moral truth, having instant relations to man's duty and destiny; and the mind of the race will never thereafter forget that truth, or cease to consider it. The earth in its orbit, or its diurnal revolution, which never varies by the millionth of a second, is not more sure or steady in its progress than is the advancing intelligence of mankind in its tendency to take up and ponder that truth, to investigate and apply it, and if it be really supreme and divine, to make it its own inspiring teacher. We are tempted to say that the race can not forget or shake it off. It can not, and still remain true to its instincts.

So it is that every influence exerted for God, and fitted in its nature to do a good work, is secure of its result; as secure as the seed is, which may be crushed, but which, if it lives, shall be the germ of an outgrowth. Speak words of earnest Christian instruction to a child or a friend; drop on these the tears of affectionate solicitude; shine on them with the beauty of a holy example, cheerful and pure; accompany them with faithful prayer, and watch over them afterward with serene fidelity—and the fruit of those words, to the welfare of man and the glory of God, is no more doubtful to the mind of the angel than if already he saw it realized. It may come at once, but it *shall* come with time! Put the Gospel in motion throughout any nation, declare the great doctrines of righteousness there, publish the expositions of duty so clearly and fully that the conscience accepts them, and you might as well say that the tides will not rally when once they have ebbed, as that those great powers of light and of love coming down from the skies will either be expelled or will make no headway. They can not be expelled. They must make headway. They meet the soul at so many points; they grasp it with such various hooks of application; they so appeal to the whole moral nature, debased and darkened, but not destroyed, as that may have been; they point so plainly the mind to its Master, and the will to its mission,

the spirit of man to the aim which exalts it, that noon does not more certainly follow morning than a widening influence follows these doctrines. They will get into hearts; they will get into households; they will take wings of speech, and pluck arms from enterprise, and march through the avenues which commerce lays open, and live as transmitted traditions of right through successive generations; they will modify the minds of the educated class, and of those whom these effect; they will finally effloresce into literatures Christianized, into just and humane institutions established, into all the expressions of a wide-working faith, and all the triumphs of a Christian civility. The interval may seem long, but the end is certain. The power may seem small, but so is the seed which one carries in a sack in comparison to the sheaves shining over the wheat-field. All peaceful revolutions, all social ameliorations, the purified life of nations and of the world, are slumbering in the Gospel; and he who would step between it and these effects, may stop the star on its march through the skies, or tell the cloud to fold up within itself its watery burdens!

My friends, let us never for a moment be discouraged, in any good work, in view of the certainties of success that surround us! The Author of the soul is more our ally than he is of the husband-man. The mind hath its answer to each fit appeal, more vital than the soil's to the impress of tillage. And while the spiritual system around us is traversed by lines which though not those of necessity are those of certainty, which lock it together, and make each part inter-active on the rest, no might can come between a right moral force, once fitly implanted and fitly nurtured, and its crowning result. The years shall forward it, and not let it die; and after ages shall bring its fruitage!

IV. Let us remember, too, in the fourth place, as a thing which illustrates all the rest, that GOD IS WITHIN AND BEHIND ALL FORCES THAT TEND TO ENLARGE AND PERFECT HIS KINGDOM, as he is beneath the physical forces which bring harvest in its season, and set on the springing seed its coronal. He never forsakes a true work for himself, and is certain to carry it to ultimate success.

He is pledged to this by his character. He is pledged to it by his promises. His Son hath come to bring to it his aid; and his Spirit descends, like the rain and the light, to carry it forward. And it is a vast thought—we never can ponder it too carefully or too long—that the mind of the Most High, his perfect intelligence, his absolute will, his infinite and untiring enthusiasm in action, are pressing this cause on every hour. He makes the earth bring forth its fruit. He makes the soul respond to truth. And his ever-active and all-present mind, which vivifies the soil, and imbues it with its force, touches the spirits of men as well, and makes them quick to believe and to feel! We could never in any degree be discouraged, we could never be otherwise than determined and

unfaltering in our work for the Master, if we realized this fact. It exalts us to companionship with God himself in our spiritual efforts! It makes the attainment of the final result as certain as his throne. And it carries us forward, as far as we believe it, with such a buoyant and indomitable resolution as Paul felt amid his missionary tours; as Luther felt, afterward, when pleading for God; as every soul must know and feel when the Infinite is its ally, and his Spirit its patron!

I think of the eloquence that inspires like a vision; that indoctrinates not only, but illuminates as well; that brings the force of some grand soul, some regal will, to urge on others to noblest action; I think of that personal pressure of one mind against another, which anticipates argument and forestalls its conclusions, which bears onward the feeble on its untroubled strength, and makes the manly more vigorous than before; which seems to radiate light from its wisdom, and energy from its fullness, without aid of argument; and then I think of the mind of God, from which all these have dependently sprung, at work each instant, at work round the world, moving princes at its will, and quickening nations, subverting oppositions and stimulating right thought, electrifying the zeal of men's earnest hearts, and covering the very wastes of heathenism with a soil of new-made desires and tendencies for the truth to be lodged in; and I *know* that his kingdom is as permanent as his being, and the coming of its triumph more sure than the sunrise! He can not be overcome; and he will not finally be successfully resisted. He hurries not, but he tarries not, and he never is weary! He makes many forces contribute to the result; and he puts that result in distant years, where we, in this spring of human history, can hardly discern it. But he never gives it up; and he only lets it linger that we may work for it, and that, through that work, his Church may be strengthened, and he be more glorified!

O my friends! let us feel what certainly is true—it is a great ennobling truth, it ought to animate all our powers, it ought to kindle our souls like inspiration—that GOD is in each movement of truth among the nations, as he is in the growth of all products that arise amid the Spring; that he opens kingdoms, and prepares wider realms, for the victory of this truth; and that he will assuredly conquer at last. If he be for us, who can be against us? If the cohorts of his purposes, marching onward from the eternities, advance upon our path, where are the hosts that shall oppose them?

Finally, my friends, let us remember WHAT THE GLORY OF THE HARVEST SHALL BE, WHEN IT IS REACHED, IN THIS DEVELOPING KINGDOM OF GOD; and in view of that let us constantly labor, with more than fidelity, with an eager enthusiasm that surpasses all obstacles, makes duty a privilege, and transmutes toil into joy!

The husbandman thinks of the autumn in the spring; of loaded wains led home with shouting; of rich fruits garnered, and firesides brightened, and households cheered, with the genial abundance. Perhaps, if he be of larger view, a patriot and a philanthropist as well as a farmer, he thinks of harvests sent abroad, to feed the hungry and clothe the shivering on distant shores; of sails of commerce spread to bear them, and other lands rejoicing to receive them, and rendering back their glad returns. And so the summer is short to him, its labors are sweet, and its progress is all exhilarate with hope! Let us, too, anticipate the harvest to come! Let our thoughts arise from this season of our sowing to that season of our reaping, and be kindled by the vision!

How glorious that shall be, when the Mind that orders all, and that pauses for no rest, hath brought it in its time! How glorious in the soul, your souls or mine, when every passion hath been subdued, and every thought hath been exalted; when all our faculties have been ennobled, and our desires made holy as the Lord's, through the mastery of the truth; when God hath perfected his kingdom in us, and the whole of our being is subject to his sway! How glorious on the earth, when nations are his children, and ages bear him witness; when the race is at rest in the vision of faith, and the liberty of love; when Jesus reigns from pole to pole! Then shall be heard no sounds of war. Then lash and chain shall have vanished forgotten from the memory of the world. Then every wrong, though founded for centuries and vast in power, shall have melted as a mist from the clear present. Then love and joy shall fill all hearts, and the songs of thanksgiving keeping pace with the hours, and overleaping the parallels, shall evermore encompass the globe! In that grand harvest, institutions of truth shall stand like sheaves; and all good acts shall drop like fruit from every life; and the graces of character shall flourish like flowers, which God hath touched with invisible pencil; and the world shall be full of the beauties of holiness!

I think of that sublime consummation, so surely promised, so swiftly coming, and oceans are but shallow brooks before this march of God in history; all lands are joined; the lingering ages hasten to the triumph; a life for him is the only true victory! Think of the reaping that waits those hearts which through all centuries have toiled for God, and put their life into his service! of the harvest which by and by shall shine before the eyes that have closed in silence on the mountains of Asia, or the dark plains of Africa, waiting for the sight of continents redeemed! Think of the jubilee with which at last they shall shout home the wondrous fruitage, when Ethiopia, that hath waited so long, stretches upward her glad and unmanacled hands; when the islands of the sea become vocal with praises; when Euphrates rolls its historic tide between the banks of a Paradise more glorious than was



Eden; and the scenes that were the starting-post of the race become crowded again with examples of its perfection! Yea, think of the joy that shall *forever* spring up in those ardent hearts, in those winged souls, as eternity opens more widely with each era the issues of their work! No conqueror then can share their triumph! No instrument less perfect than the harps of the redeemed can speak its fullness!

God give us grace to be as faithful; and give us part in that sublime future! Each day there comes to each of us the chance to labor for truth and righteousness, for God and man; to cast our seed into the field, which is the world; to make our action, for the earth and its future, coöperate with God's! Let us rightly prize this magnificent privilege! Let us perfectly fulfill this noblest duty! Let us never be wanting to any opportunity, so long as God prolongs our life! Let us faithfully testify for freedom and for truth, wherever he places us! Let us give the very virtue and life of the soul, its deepest resolution and its tenderest sensibility, its thoughts and its charities, its exertions of strength and its sweat-drops of sacrifice, to whatever will advance human welfare and peace; to whatever will spread God's kingdom wider, and make the earth meet for its coming coronation! And may God verify to us individually, in our personal growth in knowledge and in grace, as he certainly will verify to the world at large, in the progress of his kingdom to its ultimate supremacy, those words of our Lord, caught up from his view of the opening spring, but speaking with perfect authority to all time, delineating the progress and prophesying the victory of all good action, and marking the result for which we are to look: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The blade, a principle of Christian fidelity; and the full harvest heaven! The blade, our life of self-denial and charity; and the sheaves from that seed, the very glory of Millennium!



## SERMON XXIV.

BY REV. RUFUS W. CLARK,

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## THE CHRISTIAN AT SUMMER RETREATS.

"Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—PSALM 139: 7.

THE doctrine of the omnipresence of Deity, is both joyous and terrific—joyous to the soul that is at peace with God, and in harmony with his holy principles; terrific to one in antagonism to his Maker. Indeed all the features of the divine character are welcome or repulsive, according to the state of our minds. The rigidity of the divine law which is a source of delight and admiration to the righteous, is a most horrible feature to the wicked. The purity that surrounds the eternal throne attracts the one class, and repels the other.

The psalmist who enjoyed sweet communion with God, and enrapturing views of his character, offers a beautiful anthem of praise to his all-pervading presence. In language of nervous and majestic eloquence, he ascribes to God a knowledge of his movements, his down-sitting and up-rising, an understanding of his thoughts almost before they come into form and consciousness, an acquaintance with all his ways in the activity of the day or repose of night, that the most rigid human searching could not attain to. After revolving the subject in his mind, and striving to give expression to his thoughts even with an inspired pen, he suddenly exclaims: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I can not attain unto it." He felt that his capacities were not sufficient to grasp its wonders, his strength not adequate to climb the glorious heights of the stupendous theme. Glimpses of the dazzling eminence flit across his vision, and thought darts along the various avenues that open all around him; and he can only ask, (though in the Scriptures an inquiry is often the form of an intense or positive affirmation,) "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning light, and fly with their swiftness to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me. I may say, surely the darkness shall cover me; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." This omniscient eye needs no sun to guide its vision, no star as a torch-

light to enable it to search the secret caverns of the universe. Every human life in its thoughts, purposes, and deeds, is perfectly luminous before its searching gaze. No height and no depth, no distance nor darkness can afford any hiding-place from this all-pervading presence. As a practical doctrine, this bears with an immense pressure upon our individual history and future destiny! But, on the present occasion, we wish to limit its application to those seasons of recreation and leisure, when we deem ourselves in a measure exempt from a close divine inspection, and released from the rigid discharge of the duties of religion.

Under the light of this great truth, *we would remark—*

I. *That Christianity is a law of life, not a local or temporary interest.* It is not a matter for Sabbaths, and churches, and homes alone; not confined to the work of sustaining a good reputation in the public estimation, where we reside; but is a part of our spiritual existence, to go with us wherever we go, and abide with us wherever we abide. The very nature of religion shows that it is not a thing of circumstances and localities; is not like a cloak that can be put on or off at pleasure; but is a living, vital principle, planted in the heart to regulate the affections, planted in the mind to give motion and direction to the intellectual powers, planted in the soul to give its aspirations an upward tendency, and unite the spirit to the Infinite Spirit. There is no such thing as two kinds of religion, one for the outward conduct and another for the heart. If it does not exist as an inward principle, it does not exist at all. If it does not control us when withdrawn from human inspection and placed more exclusively under the divine, it has no real controlling power.

We must allow that religion has suffered immensely from a want of a uniform consistency of conduct on the part of its professed advocates; from an unwillingness to let its light shine amid all the varied circumstances and positions of life, and the reluctance to act out the principle: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

How many there are at this hour, at the resorts of gayety and fashion, who give no indication that they differ in any particular from the pleasure-loving multitude; who afford no sign that they have been solemnly consecrated to the service of a Master, who will require a strict account for every moment of time, and for every idle word that is spoken!

We would be the last to advocate that phase of religious zeal, which would interfere with any proper recreation or enjoyment, or which would thrust itself upon all circles, at all times, without the exercise of discrimination. We have implicit faith in the power of religion, to impart not only cheerfulness but buoyancy to the soul, to add happiness to all the relations and circumstances of human life.

But it is one thing to be carried away by the tide of fashion, to have religious principles swamped in the frivolities and gayeties of the passing hour, and quite another to maintain, amid all our pleasures, that lofty Christian bearing, reverence for every thing sacred, and true Christian courtesy, that would lead every spectator to take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus and had learned of him.

This tendency, when withdrawn for a season from the restraints of home, to lower the standard of the spiritual life, leads to another of a more serious and permanent character; and that is, the liability, when we move from the East to the West, or from the country to the city, to leave behind our religion. It is a fearful and startling fact that at the West, and in our cities, persons may be counted by the thousand, who, years ago, in their early homes, maintained a consistent religious profession, and enjoyed, in a measure, Christian hopes, who now are never seen within the sanctuary of God, and scarcely maintain the outward forms of a religious belief. Some may occasionally attend public worship on the Sabbath, but they have never made themselves known as the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus. When, in times past, these persons were propped up by surrounding circumstances, and stimulated to duty by the circles in which they moved, they could maintain a tolerably good profession; but these props removed, and their religion has caved in, and they occupy a position, which, if contemplated years ago, would have filled them with the deepest anxiety.

Any deviation, therefore, from the rigid path of duty is to be viewed in its tendencies. To every principle, right or wrong, there is a growth; and it is this eternal law that gives importance to what we deem the insignificant.

II. *In the next place, a relaxation from business, and a resort to the country, or to the various attractive retreats that are open to the public, may be a means of positive spiritual culture.*

That the intense devotion to business that characterizes the American people, this fierce hungering and thirsting after gain, is most hostile to the growth of vital religion, needs no argument. We almost wonder at the stability and progress of our churches, at the success of our Christian enterprises, when we realize the force of those agencies that are constantly at work to secularize every thing spiritual, and enlist in the service of Mammon, time and property and energies that belong to God.

Now, for the growth of personal piety, for the cultivation of the pure, noble, and heaven-aspiring virtues, there must be days and weeks rescued from the toil of the counting-room and store, and given to religious meditation and the study of the character and perfections of the Deity through his works. Let one escape from the prison-streets of the city, from the suffocating moral atmo-

sphere occasioned by the constant rush for the gold and silver and perishable things of earth, and if he has a spark of religious reverence or love, it will be kindled by the beauties and sublimities of nature! The very breath of the mountains will invigorate his soul as well as his body. The changing landscapes will be so many pictorial illustrations of his Heavenly Father's skill, wisdom, and love. The woods by their soft, murmuring music, their Gothic arches, cathedral lights and shadows, will invite to worship.

Our summer retreats are selected at points where the artists of the Almighty have wrought with their greatest skill—where he would have his presence and his glory most intensely recognized, and his character most fervently adored.

Can any one suppose that he has scooped out the channels of the river without designing that currents of thought and affection should run with them; that he has piled up the mountains to stand in solitary grandeur, apart from all appreciating and sympathizing spirits; that he has built Niagara, and ordained its eternal rush of waters, its ever-rising vapors of incense, revealing, as they ascend the bow of promise, its rich and variegated scenery, without a thought of the moral lesson that it is calculated to teach? Did he not place this wonder of waters on the line of the territories of two great nations, that there might be a perpetual recognition and baptism of their fraternity? Do we not see here in the mighty expenditure of force, God's willingness to lavish upon the beautiful as well as the useful? A sordid mind might mourn over such a waste of mechanical power; but it has its connecting wheels and bands, though invisible, and they are united to the intellect to set in motion its delicate mechanism; united to the heart to quicken its aspirations.

The wearing away of the solid rock apparently for miles, by the mere flow of the waters, is an emblem of the power of influence; of the wearing away of the rock of human depravity by the current of that divine life that has been let in upon human nature, and rolls on from age to age, with a full and swelling tide.

Why too, we would ask, should men resort to the Springs, attracted by the healing qualities of the waters, and yet have no thought of the fountain of salvation that has been opened for the sin-sick soul? Can a multitude gather, morning after morning, to receive the cooling draughts and not be reminded of those waters of which if a man drink he shall never thirst again? Can we be insensible to that great and precious invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely"?

Some one has said that a splendid cathedral is but the thought of the artist embodied in stone. More truly is the earth, with its solid foundation and splendid decorations, the thought of God. The monarch of falls is the thought of his power. The ever-flowing spring, with its healing virtues, is the emblem of his ever-

flowing love. The mountain is the thought of his stability and sublimity. It is a consecrated temple. It is a monument of the ever-present and eternal. It calls up the emotions of the poet as expressed in reference to Mont Blanc, whose variegated scenery, glistening peaks, five conspicuous torrents, and flowers within a few steps of the glaciers, would indicate that here was more than one thought of God.

After a beautiful allusion to the overhanging ice-masses which he calls, "motionless torrents! silent cataracts!" the poet asks:

"Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven  
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun  
Clothe you with rainbows? Who with living flowers  
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?  
God! let the torrents like a shout of nations,  
Answer; and let the ice-plains echo, God.  
God! sing ye meadow streams with glad some voice;  
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds,  
And they too have a voice; yon piles of snow,  
And in their perilous fall, shall thunder God! \* \*  
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,  
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,  
Earth with her thousand voices praises God."

One of the most delightful reminiscences connected with a visit to the summit of a mountain in a Northern State, was the season of devotion enjoyed just as the shades of evening had fallen upon the splendid prospects that had been open to us during the day. Our company, our host, and all the inmates of the hotel assembled. Those whose pathways had never crossed before, and may never cross again this side the judgment, met around one common altar. The stars watched over the worshipers with unwonted brightness and beauty. The villages at the base of the mountain and dotting the vast plain, were lying in sweet security. The rivers looked like silver threads, reflecting the soft moonlight.

An appropriate psalm was read, remarks were made, and a prayer offered up, the echoes of which may be yet lingering among those hills, the spirit of which may still hover over the spot consecrated to worship.

Can any one suppose that such a service would detract from the enjoyment of that visit, or lessen the interest with which the surrounding wonderful works of God were contemplated?

If the gay may take their frivolities to these resorts, and the learned their love of science, and the skeptic his cold contempt for religion, and if the blasphemer is not restrained in his oaths, shall not the Christian take his religion with him? Shall he who possesses the pearl of great price be ashamed of his treasure? Shall he who follows the Divine Master be ashamed of his service?

III. *Another influential consideration is the fact, that in traveling, new avenues of usefulness are opened.*



I think it will be allowed, that no circumstances in life can exempt us from the duties we owe to our fellow-men; and no Christian would desire to be released from the privilege of spiritually benefiting another, in guiding souls to Jesus. It may be said we take a journey for pleasure. We need recreation. We require a respite from the toils and cares of the Christian life. We must occasionally put off the heavy Christian armor, and have a furlough from the strife of the battle-field. Perhaps I am not familiar with the private history and exertions of the great multitude who compose Christ's army; but, as far as I know, I am inclined to the opinion, that not a very large number suffer from over-exertion in the cause of their Master. In this age of ease and luxury, there is no immediate danger that the Church will break down under its load of cares and duties. We do not very frequently meet with those who are consumed by the fires of their zeal, or who fight too valiantly the fight of faith, or who are too anxious to win the prizes of immortality. I never heard a Christian, on his dying-bed, regretting that he had been too exclusively devoted to the service of his Master, that he had been too anxious for the salvation of men. But even allowing all that is asked; admitting that we go to the springs, mountains, water-falls, for pleasure, would it lessen one iota the enjoyment at the springs to lead a thirsting soul to the fountain of spiritual waters? Would it detract from the sublimity of mountain scenery, to be able, from a lofty summit, to point a fellow-traveler to the distant mountains of spiritual light, and induce him to enter the narrow pathway leading thither? Would not such a deed consecrate the mount upon which you stood, and make it a monument of the highest pleasure? Travelers are often anxious to engrave their names upon a high and conspicuous rock. Would not the engraving of the name of Jesus upon a soul, a more enduring material, be a more precious memorial?

There is power in planting a religious principle where it is least expected, as striking impressions were made in dividing the Red Sea before the march of the Israelites, and causing water to gush forth from the smitten rock. During the great religious reformation, immense power went forth from the establishment of prayer-meetings in the very centers of commerce and trade. The fact that the great sea of trade opened before the march of the embattled hosts of God's elect, the fact that the rock of avarice was smitten and the streams of salvation gushed forth, carried with them over the land a mighty influence.

Now let a daily prayer-meeting be established at Saratoga, at Niagara, at the White Mountains, and might not the currents of fashion and pleasure be purified as the currents of commerce have been? Might not another chord be struck that would vibrate through the nation? Might not the interchange of Christian



friendship between the representatives from all parts of the land be productive of lasting benefits? Would any hour out of the twenty-four be damaged by giving one to God? And suppose any personal sacrifice were made by a Christian for the good of others, would it be any unwonted display of virtue? I remember reading of a Russian drummer, who, on being taken by enemies, was made a party to a stratagem to gain a particular fortress. The foes appeared in Russian costume, and ordered the drummer, as they advanced, to play the dragoon march of his countrymen, that they might suppose that a friendly regiment was coming to their aid. As they approached the gates, the drummer, instead of the march, beat, with all his strength, the alarm, which instantly aroused the garrison, caused the gates to be closed, and preparations to be made for resistance. The retreating foes cut the drummer in pieces; and though he foresaw his fate, still he was willing to sacrifice his life for his country.

If a soldier can serve an earthly prince with such devotion, shall the soldier of the cross be backward in making any necessary sacrifice for his Master?

IV. Finally, as we can not flee from the Divine Presence, so we can not flee from that equally universal presence, danger.

If you will take the wings of the morning light, and fly to that spot where no peril, physical or moral, lurks, there may one be safe without his religion. Every where else he needs it. You may take your seat in a railroad car, and there is an invisible messenger by your side. You may purchase a ticket for a distant village or city, and know not that it will take you to

"That undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns."

How fearful and personal the moral lessons from recent accidents, against which no foresight did provide, whatever might have been the possibilities of protection. If decayed bridges and fractured rails are to be added to collisions, and fire, and the other instruments of death, what traveler is safe? You may join an excursion party, and the notes of joy, as recently, may be changed to those of sadness. Are youth, beauty, gayety any protection against the arrows of the mysterious, ever-present messenger? Whither shall we go and he is not? He rides upon the swift engine. He sits upon the bow of the steamer. He lurks in the pestilential vapor. He sports in the lightning flash.

"So live that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan, that moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, as the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon: but sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave  
Like one who draws the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

## SERMON XXV.

BY THE REV. GORDON HALL,

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## FIDELITY IN LITTLE THINGS.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much."—LUKE 16 : 10.

OUR Saviour had just been reminding his hearers of their stewardship. Their riches were committed to them only in trust; and were to be so employed by them, and so faithfully and well, as to justify God in giving them true heavenly riches. Perishing possessions here are to be so employed as to secure the divine approbation and favor, so that when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in little, may hope to be intrusted with more. But if ye have not been found faithful in the unrighteous, that is, worldly, deceitful, disappointing riches, who will commit to your trust true riches?

We are apt to suppose little things of little consequence. Herein we often mistake, making distinctions and pronouncing judgments, which are unauthorized. Little things, as we call them, are not to be overlooked or lightly esteemed. Indeed, we can not tell what are little things. And we are sometimes discouraged at finding ourselves occupied, from day to day, with the same routine of petty affairs. Nothing grand, nothing striking—the same humble round of duties; so that life seems passing away, while we are busied only with trifles.

By no means would I question that life is often trifled away. But our Lord teaches us by the text that there is a precious significance in humble, noiseless living, if it be conscientious and faithful; and an importance in these lowly concerns, by which our superficial views should be corrected.

Fidelity gives character and consequence to our acts. Faithfulness—it is not acting at random or caprice—or with selfish purposes; it is not being the sport of circumstances or expediency. It is to act on principle. It is to persevere, to fulfill duty with a good conscience, in the fear of God, and the love of man. Such a spirit ennobles conduct. Christ dignified and honored such living, in however obscure a position, when he said: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much."

In accordance with which declaration of the text, I remark, first, That faithfulness in little things, often proves to be literally faithfulness in much. By this I mean, that little things are, in their connections and consequences, of immense importance. A heedless young man does up and delivers, in a small package, not the substance called for, but another closely resembling it. A slight mistake, one might think. An unpracticed eye would not detect it. But instead of a useful medicine, he has substituted a deadly poison; and life is the forfeit—the destruction of a family perhaps.

There is a man, whose business it is to keep a light burning. That friendly light is to be constant, reliable. It is to shine along a dangerous coast. And when the sky is dark, and the winds tempestuous, and the waves are rolling the angry flood, the bewildered mariner may see that light, may know his position, may sail clear of rocks and quicksands, into a desired haven. But on some stormy night, the keeper of the light-house is indolent, or sleepy; he trims not his lamp—lights it not in season; or lets it go out during the night-watches. He fancies the disappearance of his light, for an hour or two, is a little thing. But just at that time a vessel is on the dark waters. The voyagers look anxiously after that light. They lose their bearings. The ship strikes, and is wrecked. Just then that light was missing. It was a little thing, but it caused the dread calamity.

Enter a certain work-shop, where is heard the sound of the hammer. The mechanic is driving a rivet. Sir, make it fast. Why clinch that rivet? Why so particular? See that it be well-headed; let there be no carelessness; do your work faithfully. Why so many words, and such pains about a single rivet?

A steamer is clearing the wharf. Of choice timber, well built, richly furnished, with precious freight, with many souls on board: she plows the deep gallantly. In the dim distance she is now scarcely seen; soon is lost from view. Far out on mid ocean, she encounters head-winds, and a heavy sea; the timbers creak, the vessel labors; steam is let on, a mighty pressure; the vast machinery plies its giant strokes; the pent-up forces within will master the elements. But while working its way victoriously, while the noble steamer is commanding unbounded confidence, a dread explosion!—vessel, cargo, life—all a wreck! Ah! in that boiler there was a rivet insecure. There was a weak spot. It was small, but it was enough. Did that man with the hammer think a rivet a little thing? Was he right? Let results answer.

The child in the family is accustomed to see wine and strong drink upon the dinner-table, to see them brought forward to crown the festive entertainment. It is a little thing—that little glass. The child acquires a love for it. Appetite grows. To that small beginning may be traced the blighting of earthly prospects, and the ruin of the soul.

The young girl is taught to dance—a little thing, surely—only certain graceful movements of the body. Any thing wrong here? Nothing more than this, that it places the child in the way of temptation; and many have been courted, flattered, enticed, led into irregularity and vice, who would have escaped, if they had never learned this so-called accomplishment.

A father sets before his son the example of profanity. He only uses a word—it may be a little word of three letters. That son grows up profane. The little word is the small thread which draws after it the cord of larger size; that cord draws along the cable; and finally comes iniquity, drawn as by a cart-rope.

The mother is unfaithful. She neglects to make her little one obedient—to subdue its will. It grows up selfish, wayward, passionate—disciplined into nothing better. It passes through life headstrong, fretful; unhappy, unless always petted and gratified; uncomfortable to all around—disobedient and perverse towards God, and passes into eternity with a will never subdued towards man or God—to be restless, wretched, condemned forever.

Little business transactions, in time, give the impression to your son, clerk, apprentice, partner, customer, that a slight deviation from integrity is of little consequence. Teach any one to be dishonest in trivial affairs, and the results of that example and tuition you can never calculate. You may be opening a little channel to the pent-up waters; then the waters shall work their own way, opening for themselves an ever-enlarging course, till the little channel has become a flood-gate. By that apparently insignificant act of dishonesty, you may plant the seed of crime, and train up the giant swindler and forger.

But I must not multiply these illustrations. Enough, doubtless, has been said to justify the remark, that we know not what are little things—that little things, as they seem, may be great things. There is no safety but in a strict conscientiousness; and he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.

Again, fidelity is always the same principle, with whatsoever concerned; and it is the principle, the motive, the heart, which gives character to conduct. Hence, a slight act, so esteemed, may be of consequence for what it signifies, for the spirit which it reveals. The man whose dealings are on a small scale, will defraud only on a small scale; but this shows what his spirit is, and what he would do, if he were engaged in larger transactions. The world thus judges, and God thus judges. It has come to be a maxim, *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*. And the Lord is a God of knowledge: by him actions are weighed. The poor woman, who cast into the sacred treasury her two mites, did what was, in itself, a little thing. But that same spirit would have consecrated her millions if she had them. The plucking of a little fruit in Eden was in itself a small thing, but it disclosed a willingness to dis-

obey God. If our first parents would transgress, under such a temptation, how feeble their steadfastness, their loyalty ; how little could they be trusted ! Was not that single act one of magnitude, for the revelation of character which it made ?

The same principle which would cause one knowingly to defraud you of a cent, would move him to defraud you of a dollar. The same principle which would allow a man deliberately to transgress the least of God's commandments, would also allow him to transgress the greatest. If a man is really faithful, it is from the principle of fidelity, and this applies to every particular of right and duty, small as well as great. If one does not conform to the law of rectitude in lesser matters, he shows that his partial conformity is from a regard to circumstances, expediency, convenience, something else than an obedient heart. Hence Christ says : "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Hence it is written again : "Cursed is he that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them. He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." And it has come to be a maxim,

"Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus."

Let it be observed in this connection that little things most reveal character. It is in every day life that the real disposition comes out, is made manifest. For a great matter one will prepare, and be on his guard. But in the routine of the household and of business there is not so much room for display, disguise, and affectation. We can assume the appearance of piety and charity for the Sabbath, but we are not likely to wear it through the week unless natural. One can put on a mask to go into company, but it is very inconvenient to wear it when about our common concerns. "Great virtues," says a devout writer of the seventeenth century, "are seldom needed, and when the occasion comes, we are prepared for it by every thing which has preceded, excited by the greatness of the sacrifice, and sustained either by the brilliancy of the action in the eyes of others, or by self-complacency in our ability to do such wonderful things. Small occasions, however, are unforeseen ; they recur every moment and place us incessantly in conflict with our pride, our sloth, our self-esteem, and our passions ; they are calculated thoroughly to subdue our wills and leave us no retreat. . . . Indeed it sometimes happens that we find it harder to part with a trifle than with an important interest ; it may be more of a cross to abandon a vain amusement than to bestow a large sum in charity. . . . It is a small matter, say they ; true, but it is of amazing consequence to you ; it is a matter that you love well enough to refuse to give it up to God ; a matter which you sneer at in words, that you may have a pretense to retain it ; a small matter, but one that you withhold from your Maker, and which will prove your ruin."



Thus does faithfulness in little things disclose character and manifest the principle which reigns within. Such fidelity shows an attention, patience, earnestness, a tender conscience, a sensitive, loving heart, which is in the sight of God of great price. The principle which God values is there, however humble the sphere in which that soul is busied. Yea, the occupations of that man may be lowly, but his spirit is heavenly.

We have considered faithfulness in little things as of consequence, from the vast results often connected with little affairs, and because fidelity in these minor matters shows a principle of infinite worth, shows the heart and intent to be right.

I now observe that faithfulness in little things prepares the way, is a suitable trial and discipline for faithfulness in a larger sphere.

All attainments in this world are made from small beginnings. Who would suppose from the first lisplings of a child, that he would ever make the eloquent orator? Or who would imagine from the child's first mechanical contrivances, that he would yet be the inventor of that machinery which is to change the face of society? Who would conjecture from the child's first determination to do right, that his resolution would yet gather the strength of a martyr spirit? Compute the difference between President Edwards in his giant maturity of mind and heart, and what he was in infancy. As wonderful as was this growth, add as much to what he was on leaving this world, and who shall say for what ministries he would be qualified? Thus it is. By action on a smaller scale we grow and become qualified for actions on a higher platform.

Our fellow-men require us to pass through stages of preparation and trial before they commit to us important interests. Positions of high honor, gifts of trust and responsibility are generally the reward of fidelity, tested and approved. Let the young man acquire himself well as clerk or apprentice before he expects to be admitted to partnership. If a tradesman wants extensive credit, he is reasonably required first to prove himself entitled to such confidence. Let the sailor or soldier do well his duty as a private, and he may hope for promotion. Let the scholar show himself worthy, and he may hope for a post of eminence. Let the judge distinguish himself in the lower courts, and there is reason to suppose he will be raised to a higher seat.

If the public have honors and important trusts to bestow, they want evidence that the candidates are worthy men, fit for the responsibility, with whom the interests of society will be safe. Such a term of probation, faithfully served, is requisite, both to discipline the candidate himself and to authorize the bestowment of the promotion.

These same principles have their operation in reference to the divine dealings with men. We need to serve God well in the positions he assigns us before we have wisdom, strength, stability,



experience for higher ministries. But let the servant of God, whatever his situation, show himself completely faithful, inflexible, and who shall say for what exaltation his earnest and steadfast heart is preparing him? Who shall say what honors and trusts the Lord has in store for him? That poor woman who from her loving, confiding heart cast into the treasury two mites, all her living, who knows but she might be trusted to keep one of heaven's pearly gates? Lowly, faithful Lazarus! he may yet be commissioned to preside over some noble province of God's boundless empire. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things," says Christ, the Judge, "I will make thee ruler over many things. Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler?"

Here the kindred truth should be mentioned, that unfaithfulness in little things disqualifies for important trusts. The man who is not reliable in respect to smaller matters, shows that he lacks the principle, the essence, of integrity. If he would knowingly deceive or defraud you in the slightest particular, he is not a man to be trusted. And this dishonesty in minor matters is searing his conscience, corrupting his heart, and preparing him for greater wickedness. It is not fit that such a man should be placed in any position of responsibility. He should not be honored by God or man. No one's rights or interests are safe in his hands. That same spirit which would intentionally wrong you in a little transaction, would wrong you in a great transaction, a fair opportunity being afforded. He who would embezzle the public money, has the heart to tear up and steal the gold of heaven's pavement. He who is ready here to cavil at God's requirements, and deny God's word, may have the heart which would make him a tempter in the Paradise of some other world. He who would break one of the least of God's commandments, and teach men so, might teach the same to angels above. And hence unfaithfulness in much or little, being the same in principle, will meet with punishment. If you be the steward with ten talents, and are unfaithful in their use, condemnation must of course be your portion. Likewise, if you are intrusted with but one talent, there is the same opportunity of showing by what principle you are governed, whether of conscientious fidelity or of selfishness and indolence. With a few remarks suggested by this subject, I conclude the discourse.

First. Christ is not an unreasonable Master. He considers well the amount intrusted to us, and makes his reckoning accordingly. He does not reap where he has not sown, nor gather where he has not strewed. He is not, then, hard and austere. Yet some, I fear, misapprehend him. They are careful and troubled. Distressed because they are not doing great things, while their duty, perhaps,

lies in little things. Dear friend, put away this anxiety and fruitless toil. Is your sphere lowly? Are your duties humble? Then labor for your children, or minister to the needy and the sick. Only be faithful in your place. That is all Christ asks. He will say: "Being faithful in that which is least, thou art faithful also in much." Let the brakeman upon the railway-train be true to his duty for Christ's sake, and he serves his Master as acceptably as the conscientious officer who directs the whole enterprise. It has been remarked that if one angel were sent to occupy the throne of England's monarch, and another to sweep chimneys in London, each being faithful to his mission, they would be angels still and equally accepted by Him that sent them.

This subject then encourages us, I remark further—encourages us in the humble routine of daily life. We need not be founders of empires, or of great benevolent organizations, or managers of corporations, to approve ourselves to God. We need not be statesmen, generals, judges, noted philanthropists. We need not figure largely, loom up into the world's view. Christ sees us. We need not be heard of by the world. Christ knows us. Our life may be unostentatious, may seem monotonous. But persevere as a Christian in the family, be faithful as a servant of God in your place of business, true and conscientious in your duties as a neighbor and a citizen, and a member of Christ's Church, and you shall in no wise lose your reward. The commendation shall belong to you, He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.

I remark again, this subject corrects some erroneous views concerning the dignity of various conditions in life. It is a common mistake to suppose that dignity attaches only to conspicuous station. Station—what is it? Mere place! Is the space a man would occupy dignified? A pile of lumber may occupy more space than he. Is a seat dignified? Put a clown into it, will the seat dignify him? Is dignity dependent on titles? Away with this folly! There is no dignity but in personal worth and duty performed. And where these are, there is dignity—there is true greatness. Which was the greater, Felix in the trappings of a prince, or the Apostle Paul in chains? Was Christ undignified when he washed the disciples' feet, and said, Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. I am among you as one that serveth, and added, whoso will be great among you, let him be your servant? Our Lord has dignified lowly positions and lowly offices. For he has shown their worth in the divine esteem, and their bearings upon eternal results.

Christian wife and mother, be not troubled because Providence has not made it your lot to win a name in literature or shine in rank, or do some conspicuous thing; because Providence has appointed you less showy and honored duties. Complain not of

home-cares and incessant toils, and the unceasing round of petty concerns. Be faithful in these little things, (as you may be tempted to call them,) and you may hear your Saviour say: "I am glorified in them." Order your household well for Christ's sake. Be a pattern in your domestic relations. Regulate and train your children for usefulness and heaven, and you may be doing a more dignified work than he who occupies the supreme judicial seat in the nation.

Man of toil, do your work well, to please God, and whatever that work may be, God will honor you. The sensible and good will honor you. Man or woman, carry into your labors a spirit of faithfulness, and that principle will make your work great. Christ will say: "Ye do it unto me." Are not such honorable? "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. I say unto you, Their angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven." Beside that work-bench, beside that counter, beside that study-table, beside that sick bed, where one faithfully tends or patiently endures, angels may linger, minister, commune, and wait the time when that lowly, faithful soul shall be as the angels of God. "Great shall be your reward in heaven."

"The man who does the best his circumstance allows,  
Does well, acts nobly: angels could do no more."

It is pleasing, I remark again, to think of this life as a schooling for higher ministries. A godly father, a praying mother, a pious sister, faithful in their day—now gone to their reward—are they not as the angels, all ministering spirits? And exalted to what spheres! What high missions do they execute! We need not trouble ourselves about the sphere in which God has placed us. Accept that as his appointment. Let our concern be to perform well the duties belonging thereto. To gather strength and ability for our Master, never doubting that promotion will come to us as soon as we are able to bear it, on earth and in heaven. We shall need all our earthly training and attainments when called to fulfill ministries befitting such as are made kings and priests unto God, to reign forever and ever.

Finally. Are we faithful? Faithful in little things? Faithful to men? Faithful to God? Remember that if you are willing to slight one link in the chain of duty, you are willing the whole chain should be worthless. If you really intend to neglect one of Christ's commandments—if having done so, you do not mourn over it and repent, then you are destitute of the principle of obedient fidelity. And you must read your sentence in the words: "He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Are you faithful? Do you honestly aim at this? In all your concerns with God and man? Faithful to every trust, obligation, contract, appointment? Faithful as one who must give account at the judgment-seat of Christ? Then be steadfast. If your position

be humble, yet be content. In it serve God and your generation well. If Providence raises you to a wider sphere of action, then be faithful there, and the time will come when you shall inherit the blessings suggested by the text, when the word shall be spoken: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things; well done, good and faithful servant, I will make thee ruler over many things; honor thee with a crown of glory that fadeth not away; yea, raise thee to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

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### "LAMB OF CALVARY, SLAIN FOR ME."

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BY DR. J. L. SULLIVAN, JR.

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Lamb of Calvary, slain for me,  
 Yes ! I come, I come to thee !  
 From a world of sin and shame,  
 Where but few confess thy name,  
 From a world that *crucified* thee—  
 When thy *nearest* friend denied thee ;  
 From the sins I used to cherish,  
 From the joys of earth, that perish,  
 Turning to the joys that live,  
 Which the world can never give.  
 Lamb of Calvary, slain for me !  
 Now I come, I come to thee.

Oh ! how oft thou bad'st me come !  
 Weary wanderer, hasten home ;  
 Sinner, sorrowing o'er thy guilt,  
 I can heal thee, if thou wilt ;  
 Are thy sins of scarlet stain ?  
 I can wash all white again ;  
 Dear, though disobedient child,  
 Wilt thou not be reconciled ?  
 Thou, for whom my life was poured,  
 Turn not from thy dying Lord.  
 Lamb of Calvary, slain for me,  
 Oh ! I come, I come to thee !